

VI. Beyond 2020

The City of Villages concept and accompanying growth strategies are intended to guide future development in San Diego well beyond the year 2020. This is a long-range proposal that will not be fully implemented in many parts of the City until after 2020. Some of the urban nodes contemplated as future villages are currently experiencing demand for intensified use and have infrastructure in place. These nodes could develop in accordance with the City of Villages strategy in the next few years while other areas will not achieve urban village characteristics until much later.

A. Village Evolution

Over the next few years, the greatest share of redevelopment and village development will initially occur in the older communities. However, it is anticipated that there will be a gradual shift to newer suburban areas as communities developed after World War II begin to age and experience redevelopment pressure. After 2020, it is anticipated that a significant share of redevelopment and village development will occur in the northern portion of the City, particularly in those areas that experienced initial development after 1970.

Some of the most significant potential urban village locations that may become available in the long term are on sites that are now used for military and airport uses and are not currently planned for urban development. These sites could include Lindbergh Field, Brown Field, Montgomery Field, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and portions of Miramar Marine Air Station. Lindbergh Field, for example, has been suggested as a site that could, if the airport is relocated, support a variety of uses that could take full advantage of bay views and proximity to Downtown. Redevelopment of these airport and military sites is currently uncertain and would likely occur after 2020.

An even more important trend anticipated after 2020 than establishment of new urban villages will be the continued evolution of existing villages. In the dynamic process of urban development, some villages, including the pilot projects, will begin to form during the next decade, combining residential and retail uses. Within several years, these villages may add local office uses such as doctors and dentists offices. Still later they may include larger scale employment components. A common feature of all the villages will be ease of walking between residential units, transit stops, public facilities, and basic commercial uses. However, as the villages become more fully developed, their individual personalities will become more defined and their development patterns will become more varied and distinctive.



It is anticipated that the functions of most individual villages will develop in a gradual organic manner rather than be quickly established through the construction of a few large projects. After 2020, some of the villages may take on specialized functions that cannot even be predicted at the present time. For example, some villages could eventually contain regional entertainment centers while other villages gain renown as specialized shopping districts. Still other areas will have a wide mix of uses with no particular special emphasis.

B. The Rate of Village Development

Infrastructure that is currently lacking must be in place before some of the areas identified as potential villages can begin to accept higher density residential development and/or additional commercial uses. Transit is currently inadequate in many of the areas that have been considered as potential village locations. While some of the older communities in the City are already ripe for redevelopment, and intensification could enhance their existing village characteristics within ten to fifteen years, other potential urban village locations are characterized by relatively new shopping centers and housing that will not be ready for redevelopment for fifteen to twenty years or more.



The rate at which the City of Villages concept can be applied throughout the City will be determined largely by the rate at which infrastructure deficiencies can be remedied. Transit will be particularly crucial. As MTDB's Transit First vision is implemented, many potential village locations could begin to develop in accordance with the City of Villages concept. The rate of implementation is dependent upon available funding and political will. However, even if transit deficiencies and other infrastructure needs are fully addressed in the next two decades, it is likely that the transition from the current auto-oriented pattern of development to a more transit and pedestrian-oriented development pattern will take up to forty years to be fully achieved. The current automobile-dominated urban development pattern in San Diego has occurred over several decades and the incremental land use and transportation changes sought will likely take almost as long to realize.

Finally, a significant factor that will influence the pace at which the City of Villages strategy will be implemented is the rate of future population growth in the San Diego region. The pattern of development envisioned in the City of Villages concept will not be impacted by the rate of growth, but the rate of development of individual villages will be dependent in part on the region's population growth rate.

C. Lifestyle Trends

Certain demographic trends that are already evident in San Diego will be more fully developed by the year 2020 and thereafter. These trends include a steadily increasing elderly proportion of the population and fewer people living in detached single-family units. Many elderly people are unable or choose not to drive. The creation of a more pedestrian and transit-oriented urban pattern around village nodes will provide more options to this population group than the auto-oriented pattern of development that has been prevalent in the recent past. Under the City of Villages strategy, more seniors may not need housing developed that specifically serves seniors, instead choosing mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods that are accessible by transit or walking to a full-range of services and facilities.

Another trend that is currently in a beginning stage in San Diego, but that will be far more evident in the future, is the desire by an increasing segment of the population to live in an urban rather than a suburban setting. By 2030, San Diego will offer a broader choice of residential lifestyles resembling more mature cities such as Chicago and San Francisco. This will be the case in part because the chief advantage of suburbia in the postwar era – a home surrounded by a large yard – has already become unattainable for most San Diego residents due to the high cost and scarcity of land.

Many of the trends that will impact development and planning in the years after 2020 cannot be accurately predicted at the present time. The degree to which shortages of water and energy may impact future growth patterns is unknown. Federal funding levels for regional public facilities cannot be projected. It is already apparent that a shortage of buildable land combined with continued desirability of living in San Diego will result in a continued lack of affordable housing and high rents for office and retail space. The traditional low density pattern of development characterized by single-family subdivisions, auto-oriented retail centers and campus-type business parks will not meet the needs of this City and region in the years after 2020.

The City of Villages strategy is intended to provide a positive response to growth and development trends and an enlightened strategy for the future development of the City – a strategy that builds upon what is good in our communities and ensures a high quality of life for future generations.

